

Hist. 80010 The Literature of American History I Fall 2021 Friday 11:45-1:45
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 Office hours (Rm. 5111.09): Friday 1:45-2:30 and by appointment.

This course introduces Ph.D. students to the historiography of the U.S. through the Civil War and prepares students for the First Written Examination or an outside field in US history.

One of our concerns will be periodization. In what ways should the colonial period be considered a prologue to U.S. history? What is the status of the Revolution and the Civil War, and the political history that drives or used to drive the narrative of U.S. history between these events, amid transformations otherwise seen as social, cultural, economic? When does a division of history into periods or eras help or hinder? Is there a coherence or continuity to the “first half” of U.S. history beyond the particularities of the colonial, revolutionary, early republic, antebellum/Civil War periods? What explanations can cut across centuries and thus can organize the larger story?

Another important theme of the course is space, within and beyond the places that became the United States during this period and afterwards. Is U.S. history the story of provinces or regions becoming a nation-state, or of sections of regions converging or diverging as well as expanding? What weight should be given to the local in a moment when historians are reassessing the international or even global nature of early modern as well as modern history? Should “vast,” “atlantic” or “continental” approaches change the narrative of national development? Can empire or empires provide a more compelling and honest as well as capacious history while allowing for the different experiences of different groups in different places?

Finally, does a renewed appreciation for particularity, for oppression, for group experiences be reconciled with any national narrative? Can we do better than turning a narrative of national progress that othered early America as primitive (or as prelapsarian) into one of illiberal consensus and continuity? To put it differently: if one of the achievements of the literature of US history has been its debunking, critical, myth-breaking ventures, are there limits to those strategies and genres, and where might they be found or transcended?

We will take several deep dives into classic and recent debates and examine how these debates absorb, reflect, and refract these continuing opportunities and dilemmas in the field.

Written Assignments:

The books and articles we shall discuss include narrative histories, classics that are still in print after decades, recent monographs born as dissertations, syntheses, analytical and historiographical essays. An important part of what we will be doing is attempting to read these in light of each other. The reading is extensive, in recognition of the five credits this course carries and its status as a prerequisite for the first qualifying examination. Our goal is to prepare for the exam, of course, but also to prepare to teach this period at the college level and to lay a substantial foundation for future research and teaching in any specialty and period of U.S. history.

Instead of a seminar paper or historiographical essay, your written work for the course will consist of **weekly (2-3 page) responses to the readings**. I will provide prompting questions that will help us work toward the kinds of writing and analysis the faculty will expect for the examination. These informal short essays will be due **Thursdays by 10:00pm via email** and may serve as jumping off points for our Thursday seminar discussions.

Schedule of readings/discussions

Books with a + are available electronically via the GC library, or (with a *) at NYPL. This semester the course will have a dedicated e-reserve site maintained by the library, instead of physical book reserves. Some articles and book chapters will be posted on Blackboard.

1. Fri. Aug. 27 Introduction: History, Historians, the Nation, and the Present

Jill Lepore, “Introduction,” *The Story of America: Essays on Origins* (2012), 1-16

Jill Lepore, *This America: The Case for the Nation* (2019), ch. 1, 14, 15 (pp. 15-20, 114-38).

Annette Gordon-Reed, *On Juneteenth* (2021), Preface, ch. 1, 3, Coda (pp. 11-14, 17-29, 57-73, 139-41).

→Sept. 3 no class

2. Sept. 10 A New York School? Consensus and Conflict, Truth and Myth in 20th c. U.S. Historiography

- Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men who Made It* (1948), intro & ch. 1-6 (v-163 in older eds.)
 Hofstadter, "Consensus and Conflict in American History" in Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians* (1968), 437-66.
 Hofstadter, "Reflections on Violence in the United States" in Hofstadter and Michael Wallace eds., *American Violence: A Documentary History* (1970), 3-43.
 Hofstadter, Contents, Preface and Introduction to Hofstadter, *America at 1750: A Social Portrait* (1971), vii-xvi
 Harvey Neptune, "American Violence and the Haunting Diagnosis of Richard Hofstadter," *Small Axe* (Jan. 2021)[online]
 Nathan Irvin Huggins, "The Deforming Mirror of Truth: Slavery and the Master Narrative of American History,"
Revelations: American History, American Myths (1995), 252-83.
 Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (1998), Introduction and chapters 1-5 (pp. xiii-113).
 Eric Foner, "My Life as a Historian" (1992/2002) in Foner, *Who Owns History?* (2002), 25-46.
 +Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, Introduction, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (1999), xi-xxiv.

3. Sept. 17 How Historians Revise: American Origins and Particular Places, I

- Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (1975)
 +Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (1996), ch. 4-5, pp. 107-86.
 Benjamin L. Carp, "Edmund S. Morgan and the Urgency of Good Leadership," *Reviews in American History* 44 (Mar. 2016), pp. 1-18
 James D. Rice, "Bacon's Rebellion in Indian Country," *Journal of American History* 101 (Dec. 2014), 726-50.
 Matthew Kruer, "Bloody Minds and Peoples Undone: Emotion, Family, and Political Order in the Susquehannock-Virginia War," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (2017), 401-436.
 Jennifer L. Morgan, "Partus Sequitur Ventrem: Law, Race and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery," *Small Axe* 22 (Mar. 2018), 1-17.

4. Sept. 24 How Historians Revise – and Battle: American Origins, II=

→Read one and skim the other:

- David J. Silverman, *This Land is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving* (2019).
 +Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Phillip's War* (2018).
 Jill Lepore, "Plymouth Rocked," *The New Yorker*, 2006, repr. in Lepore, *The Story of America*, 31-43.
 James H. Merrell, "Second Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians," *William and Mary Quarterly* 69 (July 2012), 451-512.
 "Historians and Native American and Indigenous Studies" (review-roundtable with Silverman, DeLucia, et al), *American Historical Review* 125 (Apr. 2020), 517-51.

5. Oct. 1 Re-organizing Early America, I: Time and Space, Atlantic and Continental

- +Daniel K. Richter, *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Past* (2009), ch. 1-8, pp. 3-211.
 +John K. Thornton, *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World* (2012), Intro, ch. 1, 2, & 3 (pp. 1-99).
 Allan Greer, "Commons and Enclosure in the Colonization of North America," *American Historical Review* 112 (2012), 365-86
 Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands," *William and Mary Quarterly* 67, 2 (2010): 173-208
 P. Hämäläinen, "The Shapes of Power: Indians, Europeans, and North American Worlds from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century" in Julianna Barr and Edward Countryman eds., *Contested Spaces of Early America* (2014), 31-68.
 Wayne Bodle, "Atlantic History is the New 'New Social History,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 64 (Jan. 2007), 203-20.
 Karin Wulf, "Vast Early America: Three Simple Words for a Complex Reality," *Humanities* 40, 1 (winter 2019), online

6. Oct. 8 Re-organizing Early America, II: Imperial Approaches, Local Perceptions, and Change

- +Richter, *Before the Revolution*, ch. 9-12, pp. 212-323
 +Owen Stanwood, *The Empire Reformed: English America in the Age of the Glorious Revolution* (2011)
 Trevor Burnard, "Empire Matters? The Historiography of Imperialism in Early America, 1492-1830," *History of European Ideas* 33 (2007): 87-107.
 Claudio Saunt, "'Our Indians': European Empires and the History of the Native American South" in Jorge Canizares-Esguerra and Erik Seeman eds., *The Atlantic in Global History* (2006), 61-76.
 Joshua Piker, "Lying Together: The Imperial Implications of Cross Cultural Untruths," *AHR* (Oct. 2011), 964-86.

7. Oct. 15 Re-Organizing and Particular Places: Imperial New York Stories

→ Read two of the following:

- +Thelma Wills Foote, *Black and White Manhattan: The History of Racial Formation in Colonial New York City* (2004)
- + Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan* (2005)
- +Serena Zabin, *Dangerous Economies: Status and Commerce in Imperial New York* (2009)

AND

Richter, *Before the Revolution*, ch. 14-16 & Epilogue, 346-422

Amy Watson, "The New York Patriot Movement: Partisanship, the Free Press, and Britain's Imperial Constitution, 1731-1739," *William and Mary Quarterly* 77 (Jan. 2020), 33-64.

8. Oct. 22 A Long Revolutionary Era and its Long Historiography

+Benjamin L. Carp, *Rebels Rising: Cities and the American Revolution* (2009)

Robert G. Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks: How Race United the Colonies and Made the Declaration of Independence* (2021)

Michael A. McDonnell and David Waldstreicher, "Revolution in the *Quarterly*? A Historiographical Analysis, 1944–2016," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (Oct. 2017), 633–66.

Susan E. Klepp, "Revolutionary Bodies: Women and the Fertility Transition in the Mid-Atlantic Region, 1760–1820," *Journal of American History* 85 (Dec. 1998): 910–45

Gregory Evans Dowd, "Indigenous Peoples without the Republic," *Journal of American History*, 104, 1 (June 2017), 19–41.

Max M. Edling, "Peace Pact and Nation: An International Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States," *Past & Present* 240 (August 2018), 267–303.

Jane Kamensky, "Two Cheers for the Nation: An American Revolution for the Revolting United States," *Reviews in American History* 47 (2019), 308-18.

David Waldstreicher, "The Hidden Stakes of the 1619 Controversy," *Boston Review*, Jan. 2020 [online]

9. Oct. 29 Early Republic Democracy, Nationalism, Political Culture and Periods

*John L. Brooke, *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson* (2010)

Edward Pessen, "We are all Jacksonians, We are all Jeffersonians; or, a Pox on Stultifying Periodizations," *Journal of the Early Republic* 1 (1981), 1-26.

Matthew Rainbow Hale, "Regenerating the World: The French Revolution, Civic Festivals, and the Forging of Modern American Democracy, 1793-1795," *Journal of American History* (March 2017), 891-920.

Reeve Huston, "Rethinking the Origins of Partisan Democracy in the United States, 1795-1840" in Daniel Peart and Adam I.P. Smith eds., *Practicing Democracy* (2015), 46-71.

Johann N. Neem, "From Polity to Exchange: The Fate of Democracy in the Changing Fields of Early American Historiography," *Modern Intellectual History* (Nov. 2018): 1–22.

Eran Zelnik, "Self-Evident Walls: Reckoning With Recent Histories of Race and Nation," *Journal of the Early Republic* 41 (Spring 2021), 1-38.

10. Nov. 5 The State and the States: Early Republic Governance, Citizenship, and Expansion

*Beth Saler, *The Settler's Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest* (2014)

John Craig Hammond, "Slavery, Sovereignty, and Empires: North American Borderlands and the American Civil War, 1660–1860," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 4 (June 2014), 264-298

Andrew Shankman, "Toward a Social History of Federalism: The State and Capitalism to and From the American Revolution," *Journal of the Early Republic* 37 (Winter 2017), 615-53.

Gautham Rao, "The New Historiography of the Early Federal Government: Institutions, Contexts, and the Imperial State," *William and Mary Quarterly* 77 (Jan. 2020), 97–128.

Van Gosse, "Patchwork Nation: Racial Orders and Disorder in the United States, 1790-1860," *Journal of the Early Republic* 40 (Spring 2020), 45-82.

11. Nov. 12 Slavery Revisited, Capitalism Revisited, Embodied

- +Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (2014)
 Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (2017)
 Amy Dru Stanley, "Slave Breeding and Free Love: An Antebellum Argument over Slavery, Capitalism, and Personhood" in Michael Zakim and Gary Kornblith eds., *Capitalism Takes Command* (2012), 119-44.
 James Oakes, "Capitalism and Slavery and the Civil War," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 89 (2016), 195-220.
 Christopher Morris, "With the Economics-of-Slavery Culture Wars, It's Déjà Vu All Over Again," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 10 (December 2020), 524-57.

12. Nov. 19 Women and Men at Home, in Public, at Work, and on the Move

- "Politics In and Of Women's History in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 37 (Summer 2016), 313-57.
 [intro by Carole Lasser and short pieces by Ginzberg, Cohen, Hartigan-O'Connor, Stanley, J. Morgan]
 Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870* (2017)
 →Read also either:
 +Rachel Hope Cleves, *Charity and Sylvia: A Same Sex Marriage in Early America* (2014)
 +Ryan Dearing, *The Filth of Progress: Immigrants, Americans, and the Building of Canals and Railroads in the West* (2014)
 →No class Nov. 26

13. Dec. 3 Transcending Fields? Intellectuals and Change

- Robert A. Gross, *The Transcendentalists and their World* (2021)

14. Dec. 10 New Approaches to the Civil War

- Read either:
 James Oakes, *The Scorpion's Sting: Antislavery and the Coming of the Civil War* (2014)
 *Gregory P. Downs, *The Second American Revolution: The Civil-War Era Struggle over Cuba and the Rebirth of the American Republic* (2019)
 →And either:
 +Yael Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (2012)
 +Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (2012)
 → And also:
 Frank Towers, "Partisans, New Histories, and Modernization: A Historiography of the Civil War's Causes," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1 (2011), 237-64.
 Michael E. Woods, "What Twenty-First-Century Historians Have Said about the Causes of Disunion: A Civil War Sesquicentennial Review of the Recent Literature," *Journal of American History* (Sept. 2012), 415-39.
 Yael A. Sternhell, "Revisionism Reinvented? The Antiwar Turn in Civil War Scholarship," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2 (June 2013), 239-256
 Scott Hancock, "Crossing Freedom's Fault Line: The Underground Railroad and Recentring African Americans in Civil War Causality," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2 (June 2013), 159-92.
 Kevin M. Gannon, "The Civil War as a Settler-Colonial Revolution," *Age of Revolutions* blog, Jan. 18, 2016